CUBAN TRAVEL: FOLLOW THE MONEY

HON. TOM DeLAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Chairman, there is no such thing as a ''Cuban tourism industry.'' There is only Fidel Castro and his thugocracy.

If we pass this amendment, the money American travelers spend in Castro's Cuba will be confiscated by his regime and invested in his criminal empire.

If you believe American tourism will somehow help the situation there, remember that Cuba's tourist hotels—enjoyed by travelers from Canada, Europe, and elsewhere—have been up and running for decades, yet Castro's regime remains one of the horrors of the Western Hemisphere.

Make no mistake: Fidel Castro is not some curious anachronism. He is a violent criminal.

More than 100,000 Cubans have been imprisoned, and more than 15,000 murdered by his regime. Just in the last six months, he ordered what Amnesty International called ''an unprecedented crackdown'' on Cuba's pro-democracy movement.

This past spring, seventy-five pro-democracy advocates, working within Cuban law, were rounded up and imprisoned by Castro's secret police. They are now serving prison terms of up to 28 years, in unsanitary conditions and without access to health care, many for simply borrowing the wrong library books.

This amendment would reward such injustice.

Fidel Castro—thief, murderer, and tyrant—is the only Cuban who will benefit from this amendment. The hotels American tourists will patronize are off limits to ordinary Cubans, and so will be the profits they generate.

Proponents of this amendment would have us believe that vacationers in flip-flops and Hawaiian shirts, sipping mojitos at Cuban beach resorts will somehow improve human rights conditions there. Instead, Mr. Chairman, it will subsidize Castro's oppression and torture.

Those are the stark and unavoidable terms of this amendment. And I urge all my colleagues, in the name of justice, to vote no.

PRIVATE SECTOR MANDATE ESTIMATE FOR H.R. 2622, THE FAIR AND ACCURATE CREDIT TRANSACTIONS ACT OF 2003

HON. MICHAEL G. OXLEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 423(f)(2) of the Congressional Budget Act, I am hereby submitting for printing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD the statement of private-sector mandates for H.R. 2622, the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003, prepared by the Director of the Congressional Budget Office pursuant to section 424(b) of the Congressional Budget Act. This statement was not available for printing in the report by the Committee on Financial Services to accompany that bill (H. Rept. 108–263).

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, September 9, 2003.

Hon. MICHAEL G. OXLEY,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed statement on private-sector mandates for H.R. 2622, the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003, CBO completed a federal cost estimate and an assessment of the bill's effects on state, local, and tribal governments on September 3, 2003.

If you wish further details on the private-sector statement, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Paige Piper/Bach, who can be reached at 226–2940.

Sincerely,

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN,
Director.

H.R. 2622—Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003

Summary: H.R. 2622 would permanently extend the national credit reporting standards in the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) which is scheduled to expire on January 1, 2004. The bill would prevent states from imposing new restrictions on how financial institutions share consumer information. The bill also would provide new consumer protections against identity theft (that is, fraud committed using another person's identifying information). In addition, H.R. 2622 would give consumers access to certain financial records, promote increased accuracy of credit reports, and provide protections of consumers' medical information.

H.R. 2622 would impose several private-sector mandates, as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA), on consumer reporting agencies, individuals and businesses that print electronic credit card receipts, certain mortgage lenders, financial institutions, credit and debit card issuers, and debt collection agencies. CBO expects the direct costs of those mandates would exceed the annual threshold for private-sector mandates ($117 million in 2003, adjusted annually for inflation) in at least one of the first five years the mandates are in effect.

Private-sector mandates contained in bill: H.R. 2622 would impose private-sector mandates, on consumer reporting agencies, individuals and businesses that print electronic credit card receipts, certain mortgage lenders, financial institutions, credit and debit card issuers, and debt collection agencies by:

Requiring free credit reports upon the request of an individual;

Requiring truncation of credit card account numbers on receipts printed electronically;

Requiring disclosure of credit scores when approving certain loans; and

Requiring certain fraud alerts and blocks in consumer credit files.

Estimated Direct Cost of the Private Sector: CBO expects the aggregate direct costs of the private-sector mandates in the bill would exceed the annual threshold established by UMRA ($117 million in 2003, adjusted annually for inflation) in at least one of the first five years the mandates are in effect.

Consumer access to credit reports

Section 501 would require consumer reporting agencies to provide an annual free credit report upon the request of an individual. Based on information from industry and government sources, CBO assumes a threefold increase in the number of individuals requesting a free credit report each year. CBO estimates that the additional direct consumer reporting agencies for providing mandatory free credit reports would be $1.00 to $2.00 per report with a total cost ranging from $30 million to $60 million per year.

Under current law, if a consumer disputes information contained in their consumer file at a consumer reporting agency, the agency must reinvestigate the disputed information free of charge. The mandate requiring free credit reports would have a secondary effect. The number of consumers who would exercise their option to receive a free annual credit report would likely increase the number of subsequent reinvestigations. According to industry sources, the cost for additional reinvestigations would be $7.00 to $8.00 per reinvestigation. Assuming half of those individuals who receive a free credit report dispute the information requiring a reinvestigation, the total cost would range from $110 million to $125 million per year. Such cost would not be direct cost, as defined in UMRA, and would not count towards the statutory threshold.

Truncation of credit card account numbers

Section 203 would impose a private-sector mandate by requiring individuals and businesses that accept credit cards to truncate the credit card account numbers by including no more than the last five numbers on an electronically printed cardholder receipt. The mandate would take effect three years from the date of enactment for machines currently in use and beginning in 2006 for machines put into service after January 1, 2005. According to the credit card processing industry, some systems are currently in compliance because they are capable of electronically printing truncated account numbers on customer receipts. In order to comply with this mandate, some merchants would have to make modifications to their systems, including software reprogramming, formatting changes to dial-up terminals, and purchase of new printing devices. Costs to replace machines would range from $300 to $1,000 per unit. Assuming merchants would have to replace 25 percent of the currently used machines in 2007, the cost to replace such machines, including programming modifications, would amount to at least $85 million in that year.

Disclosure of consumer credit score

Section 502 would require certain mortgage lenders that use a consumer credit score in approving loans to provide a copy of the credit score and associated information received from a consumer reporting agency to the customer as soon us reasonably practicable. Based on approximately 13 million annual mortgage loan applications affected by this provision, and handling and mailing costs provided by the industry, CBO expects that the direct cost to provide such information would range from $35 million to $55 million per year.

Fraud alert in credit file

Section 202 would require consumer reporting agencies to include a fraud alert in the file of a consumer and disclose to the consumer that they may request a free copy of the file when the agency receives a direct request that a consumer has been or is about to become a victim of fraud, including identity theft. A consumer reporting agency would also be required to include an active-duty alert in the file of an active-duty military consumer upon their request. In addition, section 205 would require consumer reporting agencies to block any information in the file of a consumer that the consumer identifies as resulting from an alleged identity theft and confirms with a police report. An agency also would be required to notify the furnisher of the information identified by the consumer of certain information regarding such a block. According to the consumer reporting industry and government sources, the national consumer reporting agencies generally provide such alerts and blocks voluntarily. Therefore, CBO estimates that the direct cost to comply with those mandates would not be significant.

Other notification and disclosure requirements

Other provisions of the bill would impose private-sector mandates as follows:

Prohibit any person who receives a copy of a police report from a consumer regarding identity theft from furnishing any negative information on the consumer to a consumer reporting agency;

Require a financial institution that extends credit to provide a one-time notice in writing to a customer, no later than 30 days after the institution furnishes negative information to a consumer reporting agency regarding credit extended to the customer;

Require credit card issuers to clearly and conspicuously disclose to a consumer their ability to increase an annual percentage rate in certain circumstances when making unsolicited offers of credit to consumers; and

Require a debt collection agency that learns information in a consumer report is the result of identity theft or otherwise is fraudulent to notify the furnisher of the information or the relevant consumer reporting agency that the information is fraudulent.

Based on information from various industry and government sources, CBO expects the direct cost to comply with those mandates would not be as significant as the direct costs of other mandates in the bill.

In addition, the bill would impose other private-sector mandates as follows:

Require a consumer reporting agency that receives a request for a consumer report using an address substantially different for the addresses in the consumer's file to notify the requester of the existence of the discrepancy;

Require credit and debit card issuers that receive a request for additional or replacement cards on an existing account within a short period of time after receiving a change of address form to notify the cardholder at the former address or use other means to confirm the address change; and

Prohibit a consumer reporting agency from providing credit reports that contain medical information with some exceptions and would require medical companies to identify themselves as such when reporting credit information.

According to industry sources, many entities currently comply with such requirements voluntarily, and therefore, the direct cost to comply with those mandates would not be significant.

Estimate prepared by: Paige Piper/Bach.

Estimate approved by: Roger Hitchner, Assistant Director for Microeconomics and Financial Studies Division.

TRIBUTE TO MOTHER TERESA

HON. MARTIN FROST

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the late Mother Teresa of Calcutta for her many years of dedication to the world's poorest citizens.

Ordained as a sister in 1928, Mother Teresa originally served as a teacher at St. Mary's High School in Calcutta from 1929 to 1948. In 1948, the poverty outside her convent inspired her to leave her school and begin working to help the country's most vulnerable citizens.

In 1950, she founded the Sisters of Charity with a mission to serve the poor, the suffering, and the dying in whatever place they called home. Today Mother Teresa's order has over 5,000 sisters and brothers and over 50 different relief efforts to help the ''poorest of the poor'' in India. In her later years, she worked to establish hospice programs for AIDS patients.

Mother Teresa has been recognized worldwide for her devotion to the poor. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Foundation for Hospice and Homecare in 1985.

Mr. Speaker, few people have served humanity with more compassion and love than Mother Teresa. Mother Teresa was a perfect example of love and compassion to people of all nations and all religious backgrounds. Once quoted as saying, ''Let no one come to you without leaving better and happier,'' Mother Teresa lived her faith. While her work lives on today in the work of her order, she deserves special recognition for her tremendous achievement. I know that my colleagues will join me today in honoring Mother Teresa's life and wishing her religious order the greatest success in their future endeavors.

TRIBUTE TO BOBBY SPIEGEL—2003 BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN

HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to an individual whose dedication and contributions to the community of Corona, California are exceptional. Corona has been fortunate to have dynamic and dedicated community leaders who willingly and unselfishly give their time and talent and make their communities a better place to live and work. Bobby Spiegel is one of these individuals. On September 30, 2003, Bobby will be honored at the 2003 Distinguished Citizens Awards Dinner organized by the Boy Scouts of America.

Bobby graduated from Corona High School and has been a Corona resident since 1973. He attended Fullerton Junior College and began his career as an entrepreneur with his first business, The Flower Shoppe. He sold the business to work in the family electrical business in 1980. In 1989, while still working for the family business, he and his wife, Karen, a Corona City Council Member, started Spiegel Enterprises/Publications.

Bobby began volunteering at a young age when he first joined the Jaycees, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, in 1976. He served in almost every capacity and learned from the experience. He served as state president in 1986 and 1987 and was honored with one of the top ten awards in the nation for his service. Over the years, Bobby has also served on the Board of Directors for several community and professional organizations including the American Cancer Society, The National Electrical Contractors Association, and the YMCA. Bobby was also the charter president of the Circle City Rotary Club and is past president of Congregation Beth Shalom. He currently serves as Chairman for the Corona Regional Medical Center Foundation.

Bobby has been recognized for his impressive community service and exemplary leadership. He was the recipient of the Outstanding Young Men of America award, the California Jaycees and US Jaycees awards, Rotary International award, and was named 1988 Corona Citizen of the Year.

Bobby and Karen have five children, Tanya, Rebecca, Rachel, Isaac, and Joshua who continue their parent's commitment to community involvement and service.

Bobby's tireless passion for community service has contributed immensely to the betterment of the community of Corona, California. He has been the heart and soul of many community organizations and events and I am proud to call him a fellow community member, American and friend. I know that many community members are grateful for his service and salute him as he receives the 2003 Boy Scouts of America Distinguished Citizen Award.

CONGRATULATING ALEIDA VARONA, ADMINISTRATOR OF THE PUERTO RICO CHILD SUPPORT ADMINISTRATION, FOR RECEIVING THE COMMISSIONER OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT'S ''ACHIEVEMENT BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY'' AWARD

HON. ANÍBAL ACEVEDO-VILÁ

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 9, 2003

Mr. ACEVEDO-VILÁ. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to share some excellent news with my colleagues, and to give credit where credit is due. I am very proud to announce that Puerto Rico's Child Support Enforcement Administrator, Ms. Aleida Varona, has been singled out by the HHS's Administration of Children and Families' Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to receive their first ever Achievement Beyond the Call of Duty Award. What makes me even more proud, especially in these times, is that her ''beyond the call of duty'' project was part of the effort to mobilize our troops to Iraq. Ms. Varona's award is therefore not only a recognition of her own commitment and hard work and that of the administration of Gov. Sila María Calderón. I believe this award, more importantly, recognizes two of the highest values that Puerto Ricans hold dear: the central importance of family and our great pride in and loyalty to our country, the United States of America.

I have mentioned before how committed Gov. Sila Calderón and her administration is to protecting the well being of our children, and especially to making sure that all of Puerto Rico's children receive the resources and support they need to grow safely and soundly into productive, healthy citizens. Ensuring that every child gets the appropriate support from each of their parents is a cornerstone of this goal. To achieve this the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has developed one of the most modernized and effective Child Support enforcement programs in the Nation. Last year, the Commonwealth collected $223 million in child support payments for approximately 151,000 families. This amounts to three times Puerto Rico's welfare grant—a ratio that is